



NEWS RELEASE

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ■ BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
NEW MEXICO STATE OFFICE ■ 1474 RODEO RD ■ SANTA FE, NM 87505
Hans Stuart ■ External Affairs Chief ■ 505.438.7510

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For Additional Information
Howard Parman 505.627.0212
Hans Stuart 505.438.7510

BLM Issues Proposal to Amend Resource Management Plans to Protect Habitat for Lesser Prairie Chicken and Sand Dune Lizard

The Bureau of Land Management today announced the availability of a draft ‘Special Status Species Resource Management Plan Amendment’ and Environmental Impact Statement (RMPA/EIS). Today’s announcement kicks off a 90-day public review and comment period for the document.

The draft RMPA/EIS analyzes five alternatives that will allow continued oil and gas development, livestock grazing and off-highway vehicle uses on federal public lands in the planning area while protecting habitat for the lesser prairie chicken and the sand dune lizard. Both species are candidates for federal listing as threatened or endangered species.

“We think the public and the species will be better served by having the BLM act now, instead of waiting until the species are federally listed as threatened or endangered,” said Doug Burger, Manager of the BLM’s Pecos District. “Acting now, in fact, should prevent their listing and give us the flexibility to allow other uses on public lands in the area.”

The public can access the draft RMPA/EIS at BLM’s website: **www.nm.blm.gov**. Copies of the document can be obtained at BLM’s Roswell and Carlsbad Field Offices or by calling 505-627-0272.

The planning area in the draft RMPA/EIS covers 1.8 million acres in Roosevelt, Chaves, Eddy and Lea Counties, which includes 847,000 acres of public land with an additional 298,000 acres of federal mineral estate. When finalized, the RMPA/EIS will amend resource management plans for the BLM’s Roswell and Carlsbad field offices.

Comments can be mailed to the BLM Roswell Field Office, Attention: RMPA, 2909 West Second Street, Roswell, NM 88201. Comments can also be faxed to 505-627-0276 or sent via e-mail to **NMRFO_Comments@blm.gov**. All comments must be dated by January 18, 2007.

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The BLM will hold a series of public meetings in November to receive comments on the draft RMPA/EIS:

Thursday, 11/9	Hobbs Public Library, 509 N. Shipp, Hobbs
Thursday, 11/16	Chaves County Commission Chambers, 1 St. Mary's Place, Roswell
Tuesday, 11/21	Carlsbad Public Library Annex, 101 S. Halagueno, Carlsbad
Tuesday, 11/28	Artesia Community Center, 612 N. 8th St., Artesia
Thursday, 11/30	Room 2, Midland Center, 105 N. Main, Midland, TX

All meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m. and conclude at 9:00 p.m.

The above meeting schedule and other information about the draft plan amendment will be available on the BLM's website or can be obtained by calling either the Carlsbad (505-234-5972) or Roswell (505-627-0272) Field Offices.

The prairie chicken's habitat covers portions of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Habitat for the sand dune lizard is found only in New Mexico. Both species inhabit sand dune/shinnery oak habitat in southeast New Mexico.

The draft RMPA analyzes five alternatives and compares them to current management. The preferred alternative would establish four management areas: a core area, primary population area, sparse and scattered population area, and an isolated population area. In addition, BLM will conduct thorough site-specific reviews before any oil and gas permitting decisions are made. The BLM will monitor overall development to ensure mitigation is effective in reducing environmental impacts and will continue working toward a balance that conserves public lands and their resources while providing the opportunity to develop nationally important oil and gas fields in New Mexico.

The BLM expects to issue a final plan amendment in late 2007. The planning process began in late 2004 with a 'public scoping' period for the public to comment on the issues and concerns that the BLM should consider during the development of the Resource Management Plan Amendment.

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